

PAYMENT OF INSURANCE PROCEEDS TO AN ALTERNATE BENEFICIARY WHEN FIRST BENEFICIARY CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED

*Current law*

Under chapter 19 of title 38, United States Code, there is no time limitation for a first-named beneficiary of a National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) or a United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI) policy to file a claim for proceeds. As a result, when the insured dies and the beneficiary does not file a claim, VA is required to hold the unclaimed funds indefinitely in order to honor any possible future claims by that beneficiary. VA is not permitted to pay the proceeds to an alternate beneficiary unless VA can determine that the first beneficiary predeceased the policyholder.

*House bill*

Section 401 of H.R. 2540 would grant the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the authority to authorize payment of NSLI or USGLI proceeds to an alternate beneficiary when the proceeds have not been claimed by the first-named beneficiary within three years following the death of the policyholder. If no beneficiary has filed a claim within five years of the veteran's death, benefits could be paid to such person as the Secretary determines is equitably entitled to the proceeds of the policy.

*Senate bill*

The Senate bill contains no comparable provision.

EXTENSION OF COPAYMENT REQUIREMENT FOR OUTPATIENT PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

*Current law*

Section 1722A(c) of title 38, United States Code, furnishes the Secretary the authority, through September 30, 2002, to require a copayment of \$2 for each 30-day supply of medication VA furnishes a veteran on an outpatient basis for the treatment of a non-service connected disability or condition.

House bill Section 402 of H.R. 2540 would extend until September 30, 2006, the authority of the Secretary to require a \$2 copayment for each 30-day supply of medication.

*Senate bill*

The Senate bill contains no comparable provision.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH SERVICES IMPROVEMENT FUND MADE SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATIONS

*House bill*

Section 403 of H.R. 2540 would amend section 1729E of title 38, United States Code, by making the availability of funds in the VA's Health Services Improvement Fund subject to the provisions of appropriations acts effective October 1, 2001.

*Senate bill*

The Senate bill contains no comparable provision.

PILOT PROGRAM FOR EXPANSION OF TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE ACCESS TO VETERANS SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

*Current law*

VA provides various toll-free automated telephone response systems for veterans to furnish them information on VA benefits and services.

*House bill*

Section 407 of H.R. 2540 would establish a two-year nationwide pilot program to test the benefit and cost effectiveness of expanding current access to VA veterans service representatives through a toll-free telephone number. Under the pilot program, the Secretary would be required to expand the available hours of such access to veterans service representatives to not less than twelve hours on each regular business day across U.S. time zones and not less than six hours on Saturday. The pilot would also require that such service representatives have available to them information about veterans benefits provided by all other federal departments and agencies, and state governments.

*Senate bill*

The Senate bill contains no comparable provision.

CODIFICATION OF RECURRING PROVISIONS IN ANNUAL DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACTS

*Current law*

Each year the Congress appropriates funds to the Department of Veterans Affairs as part of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, Independent Agencies Appropriations Act. Although the amount of the appropriations

varies from year to year, the purposes for which appropriations are made are generally fixed, and change little, if any, from year to year.

*House bill*

Section 409 of H.R. 2540 would codify recurring provisions in annual Department of Veterans Affairs Appropriations Acts.

*Senate bill*

The Senate bill contains no comparable provision.

ORDERS FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2001

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Friday, December 14; that immediately following the prayer and the pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and the Senate resume consideration of the farm bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there will be no rollcall votes tomorrow. The next rollcall votes will occur on Tuesday, December 18, at approximately 11 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 9:08 p.m., adjourned until Friday, December 14, 2001, at 9:30 a.m.